



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

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19 May 2020

To the people of the Diocese of Rockhampton

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

Over these past few months, we have been in challenging times as we react and respond to the various directives coming from the Australian Government and Queensland Health to ensure that all of our people are kept safe and healthy.

I have been receiving many requests for our churches to be reopened and for masses.

On 8 May 2020, Queensland Health issued guidelines as outlined in the COVID-19 Map – easing Queensland restrictions.

The Parish Priests, Administrators and Pastoral Directors of our parishes have been working closely with their Parish Leadership Groups, Parish Pastoral Councils and Regional Pastoral Councils. They have been putting into place how Mass, baptisms and funerals will be provided as the restrictions lift but keeping within the directives of Queensland Health and keeping you safe.

Queensland Health provide the directives for us all to follow and there are penalties if they are not followed. You will note at the end of each directive, 100 penalty points apply, currently one penalty point is \$135, i.e. \$13,500.

From 15 May the numbers present allowable are:

- Weddings – 10 people including the priest
- Funerals – 20 inside and 30 outdoors including the priest
- Masses and baptisms – 10 people including the priest

While other businesses are allowed more, Queensland Health is allowing churches the above numbers only.

Our Parish Priests, Administrators and Pastoral Directors are examining ways how churches may be opened for private prayer. I have directed that if a church is opened for private prayer, then it is for only a few hours and manageable for the pastor.

Bishop Michael McCarthy

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I do direct the following happens for when the church is opened for a religious service including private prayer and according to the guidelines and requirements of Queensland Health:

- physical distancing is maintained – 1.5 meters
- 4 square meters per person indoors
- hand hygiene
- frequent environment cleaning and disinfection of the internal hard surfaces.
- occupancy of space will be monitored by the Parish Priest, Administrator and Pastoral Director.
- Queensland Health is very clear that those who are over 70 years of age or fall into the vulnerable category should stay home and minimise interaction.
- The Parish Priest, Administrator and Pastoral Director is to record in writing the name, phone number and the time of the visit for each visitor as a protection to assist with contact tracing if necessary.

I have attached the following documents to this letter for your information and guidance as we work together to ensure that we continue on the path of recovery:

- COVID Safe Plan for Parish Communities
- COVID-19 Church Cleaning Protocols
- Stage 1 Eased Restrictions Schedule
- COVID-19 Checklist for Vulnerable and High-Risk Workers
- Checklist for Positive COVID-19 Diagnosis
- COVID-19 Checklist for Parish Reopen

I ask you all to join with me and adhere to these directives for the health and safety of all of our people during this time of the pandemic.

Finally, a reminder to all parishioners and pastors - no one is to enter a church, parish building or a diocesan workplace if feeling ill or has symptoms of cold or flu. Please stay home and rest and seek medical attention.

I look forward to when we will all be back in our churches and hopefully by mid-July, we will be able celebrate together in reasonable numbers.

Yours sincerely



Most Rev Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton